

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR ADVOCACY AND COMMUNICATIONS

Reporting to and working with the Deputy CEO and overseeing our communications and events staff, the Associate Director of Advocacy & Communications is a senior member of the Leadership Team responsible for providing management and strategic leadership across advocacy, communications, events and campaigns. This role is a critical link between the Leadership and Senior Management teams and responsible for turning our strategic and project objectives into visible, measurable and lasting impact.

The Associate Director of Advocacy & Communications is responsible for translating NEF's research, policy ideas and community campaigns into compelling public narratives and credible advice that influences decision-makers, engages stakeholders, and advances organisational impact. Working across the programmes division, this role develops and executes integrated influencing campaigns that elevate the organisation's voice, build coalitions and power, and drive change.

The ideal candidate is an experienced advocacy and communications professional with excellent political judgment and networks, strong writing and persuasion skills, and a track record of winning change. They are equally comfortable developing long-term strategy, managing rapid-response communications, and mentoring staff. They enjoy balancing 'insider' and 'outrider' strategies, and are creative about the different pathways to influence for each. Working across a broad strategy, they are well informed of the different policy windows and willing and able to take the tough decisions to prioritise for impact – without losing sight of our independence.

A trusted advisor to the Deputy CEO, wider Senior Management Team and Trustees, they provide insight and advice on communications, political context and influencing opportunities, compliance and risk.

Reporting to: Deputy CEO

Direct Reports: Head of Communications and Events Coordinator

Committee: Programmes and Impact Committee

Location: London

Salary Band: Associate Director

JOB DESCRIPTION

Strategic Leadership

- Play a key role in organisational strategy, including the design of major programmes of work, and corporate planning as a senior member of the Leadership Team and adviser to the SMT.
- Manage a team that includes a Head of Communications, Senior Press Officer, Digital Communications Officer, Communications Officer and Events Coordinator. Line manage the Head of Communications, and other roles where required.
- Manage the communications, advocacy and events budgets, ensuring resources are effectively stewarded towards the achievement of our goals.
- Lead on and ensure coherence between our organisational objectives to 'shape the debate' and 'influence policy change' – designing outputs and KPIs, advising on influencing targets, advocacy strategies, and monitoring and driving performance.
- Work with the Head of Finance and Head of Fundraising to design a sustainable funding mechanism for our influencing work (communications, advocacy and events).
- Build collaborative relationships across the organisation and represent NEF externally to policymakers, media, partners and donors.
- Prepare reports and recommendations for SMT, Trustees and the Board's Programmes and Impact Committee.

Communications Strategy & Planning

- Lead the development and delivery of NEF's medium-term communications strategy, in partnership with the Head of Communications – including strategies for digital, press, and movement communications.
- Ensure the media grid or other tools are deployed effectively to plan the content and timing of publications, news releases and digital campaigns. Make, own and communicate decisions where plans change.
- Work with the Head of Communications to identify communications skills gaps and training needs among the wider staff team.
- Advise SMT and Trustees on communications opportunities and risks, including crisis communications. Support SMT with media preparation.
- Ensure programme heads have embedded communications goals into their teams' performance objectives and are making sufficient progress. Make progress and learning against KPIs visible to staff, hold staff accountable and recalibrate where necessary.
- Provide advice and sign-off on high-stakes media to ensure consistency, quality and alignment with our organisational values.

Advocacy Strategy

- Monitor the political, media and policy landscape to identify emerging opportunities and risks. Spend at least one day per week in Westminster or with other influencing targets, including attending meetings and events.
- Develop and implement integrated advocacy strategies aligned with the organisation's objectives, and especially our policy priorities.

- Organise and lead on engagements with influencing targets at different levels and locations of government (politicians, advisers and officials). Develop and present policy briefings, oversee submissions and contribute to roundtables and events.
- With research heads, lead on plans and preparations for major events (Budget, Spending Review, party conferences etc) that deliver impact.
- Support staff to identify and create opportunities to influence legislative, regulatory and public policy debates. Shape these via funding applications, ad-hoc advice, the Policy Cycle and training.
- Manage the Events Coordinator to deliver a financially sustainable and visible programme of events that achieves impact because the right policymakers learn about, engage with and are seen to champion our ideas.
- Build and maintain strong relationships with policymakers, advocates, coalition partners and other key stakeholders. Support colleagues to do the same, track engagements and facilitate timely intelligence-sharing.
- Lead on organisational compliance with Charity Commission regulations, including on political activity - ensuring that at all times we are, and are seen to be, independent.

Campaigns and Partnerships

- Advise staff managing community-facing work on political opportunities, influencing targets and campaign tactics.
- Collaborate with partner organisations to amplify shared policy and campaign goals, including overseeing our involvement and impact in official coalitions.
- Support the Head of Communications to develop our movement communications offer and ensure our community work is visible in NEF's corporate communications.
- Ensure NEF's values, voice and responsibilities are preserved in communications channels and content that is shared with partners.
- Support communications staff to plan integrated and impactful influencing campaigns that combine community action, research, media and digital.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

Qualifications

Essential

- 7–10 years of progressively responsible experience in advocacy, strategic communications, public affairs, political campaigns, or nonprofit leadership.

Desirable

- Bachelor's degree in communications, public policy, political science, journalism, or a related field.

Knowledge & Experience

Essential

- Demonstrated success developing and executing advocacy or public policy campaigns.
- Good knowledge of progressive public policy issues such as labour markets, climate change, housing, macroeconomics, and devolution.
- Strong understanding of policymaking processes and the political landscape, and experience navigating it to win change.
- Experience managing media relations and working with journalists.
- Experience supervising staff and managing cross-functional projects.
- Strong knowledge of Charity Commission and Electoral Commission guidelines and regulations.
- Experience advising Boards and Committees on communications and/or political risks.
- Experience contributing at a Senior Management Team level.
- Proven experience developing communications and/or advocacy strategies, budgets and long-term planning.

Highly Desirable

- Experience working in a think tank, advocacy organisation, nonprofit, civil service, union, or political environment.
- Experience acting as a spokesperson.
- Familiarity with digital advocacy, social media strategy, and audience segmentation and engagement.
- Experience working with diverse coalitions and communities.
- Experience representing an organisation with funders and external stakeholders.

Skills & Attributes

Essential

- Exceptional writing, editing, and oral communication skills.
- Strategic thinker with strong political judgement and ability to make trade-offs.
- Strong network of trusted policy and political relationships.
- Excellent leadership, influencing and stakeholder management skills.
- Able to balance strategic priorities with operational delivery.
- Organised, proactive and able to manage multiple and competing priorities in a fast-paced environment.

Motivation

- Commitment to NEF's mission and values.
- Commitment to continuous improvement, innovation and collaborative working.

Last reviewed & updated [13 Aug 2026]

Pay band AD